

Questions, Comments and Suggestions from the February 26, 2004 Community Workshop for The Carroll Avenue Streetscape Project

Philadelphia/ Carroll Intersection

Questions and answers:

Q: How is the crosswalk changing at this intersection? And how does that affect the stop bar/signal?

The crosswalk will have to move to accommodate the new fire station. It will be closer to the stop bar, reinforcing the need for drivers to stop at the bar instead of pulling forward. This crosswalk will be addressed as part of the new fire station project. This project proposes to reconstruct the ramp so that it is accessible to wheelchairs.

Q: What about physical changes to Carroll Ave near Philadelphia to calm traffic?

The plan may entail moving the crosswalk. Other traffic calming measures such as street trees, narrower travel lanes, and bicycle lanes will lead to this intersection and will help calm traffic.

Comments:

- Drainage issues present here.
- Talk with residents before you consider eliminating the left turn from Carroll to Philadelphia during rush hour.
- Moving the crosswalk at Philadelphia further west would expect pedestrians to walk about 80 feet out of their way if they're going from Philadelphia to turn left towards Takoma Junction. Not a good idea.
- Need a choke point at Philadelphia and Carroll.
- There's not enough space for the planter/ barrier between road bed and sidewalk on north side.

Suggestions:

- Make the corner wider corner so crossing is narrower.

Carroll Ave

Questions and answers:

Q: Is pedestrian traffic at park and Columbia sufficient to request that SHA reduce the posted speed to 15 MPH?

The City would need to negotiate with SHA to change the speed limit. This is not likely to happen during this project, but may be considered in the future.

Q: Will we continue brick across driveways?

It is unlikely because of the way driveway aprons are constructed. It is possible that if the sidewalk has brick edging part of the design may be carried through to the driveway.

Q: Do you need SHA approval for crosswalk in the middle of the block of Carroll (between Philadelphia and Park)?

Yes. The City is currently negotiating with SHA to add crosswalks. Curb ramps will be planned even if crosswalks are not approved. The City will be conducting a pedestrian count the morning of March 14th and the morning and afternoon of March 16th weather permitting.

Comments:

- Easement process needs to be improved/ coordinate with owners
- Like the curviness of a sidewalk
- The safety issues on the North side have not been addressed in the residential area.
- Coordinate with lights/ timing. Traffic backs up from Philadelphia/Carroll crossing back to Columbia all the time.

Suggestions:

- Move the mid-block crosswalk a little further east.
- Include some type of brick treatment in existing grass strip on North side

Columbia/Park/Carroll Intersections

Questions and answers:

Q: Does the design address the area of the car crashes by Columbia?

Yes. The proposal includes new planters, a wider sidewalk, and a better-defined curve.

Comments:

- Like the idea of a pedestrian island at Columbia.
- Increase sidewalk width on north side of Carroll by Park and chain fence.
- Put crosswalk at Park/Columbia where kids actually cross.

Suggestions:

- Islands are good idea at Columbia. Consider adding them at Tulip and other places along Carroll. They would help define the edge of the road.

Tulip/Carroll Intersection

Questions and answers:

Q: Why isn't there a crosswalk on the other side of Tulip Ave?

The existing crosswalk is coordinated with the traffic signal. The City is negotiating with SHA to add crosswalks and is considering this site.

Q: Why can't we have bump outs on both sides of Tulip?

The design must ensure access to drivers making a left turn from Tulip. Also, a school bus stops there and needs adequate space. We are investigating bump outs at this location.

Q: Where does the right-of-way fall in relation to the retaining wall on Carroll by the intersection with Tulip Ave?

The City does not yet have an exact survey of the right-of-way for this portion of the project. This issue will be addressed in the final design plan.

Laurel/Carroll Intersection

Questions and answers:

Q: Are bump outs enough to increase safety for pedestrians by the alleyway to parking?

The bump outs will help slow traffic throughout the intersection. As part of a separate project, there is a proposal to make the alley one-way going into the parking area.

Comments:

- Like idea of removing right turn light

Suggestions:

- Identify and define the alleyway that leads to parking by using different materials.
- Make a "scramble" intersection with different paving so all traffic is stopped and pedestrians can cross to any corner.
- Make crossing times longer
- Add a traffic circle - could be painted art.
- Put bulb-outs at Laurel Ave.

Laurel Avenue

Questions and answers:

Q: Is it private or public area for the new sidewalks?

The new sidewalks will be in the public right-of-way. The City is not asking for easements along Laurel Ave.

Q: Why will the median be at grade?

Many residents are concerned about tripping over the current curb. Also, the median's plantings are currently not very healthy. An at-grade median would provide better pedestrian access during the farmer's market, offer a smoother surface for handicapped accessibility, and provide opportunities for new benches or other street furniture.

Q: Trees have trouble surviving in the median. Can we move the trees to another area where they have more room?

The proposed changes would probably require the existing trees to be removed. Two trees are healthy enough to be relocated. The new trees would be planted with structural soils, which help provide the roots with more room, air and water to grow.

Comments:

- Like the design of the median and surrounding sidewalks.
- Bollards more amenable than planters.
- Need definition of median for drivers such as some slight change in elevation.

Suggestions:

- Consider permeable pavement in Laurel median.
- Consider narrowing lanes and increasing width of sidewalk and median area
- If you use processed asphalt use an edge.

Sidewalks**Questions and answers:**

Q: Driveway aprons - can we pave 4 feet of existing drive to restrict gravel moving to sidewalk?

The City will have to evaluate the cost of this idea. It is possible.

Q: Can you require people to make their driveway aprons more narrow?

No, changes are voluntary.

Comments:

- Sidewalk to driveway transition is important.
- Brick sidewalks can present problems for maintenance and problems with "smoothness".
- Also frost/heave issues with brick.
- Concrete provides a smoother surface
- If we use brick make sure they are installed correctly
- There are historic district restrictions regarding sidewalk materials.
- Like the idea of varying sidewalk width to accommodate trees.

Suggestions:

- Use brick edging for new curb extensions
- Use brick to edge/line entire project area
- Use concrete with insets of art to provide continuity
- Use existing conditions and keep good brick
- Use medallions in sidewalk to maintain continuity.
- Continue brick towards residential area
- Use texture/pattern with brick.
- Connect texture and pattern between downtown area and residential area.
- Mix brick surfaces with pressed asphalt.
- Pick a material that is not slick in rain/snow
- Incorporate art into concrete sidewalk (patterns, prints, mosaics in sidewalk)
- Bulbouts should have a consistency: rectangle is a pedestrian feature, trapezoid is a traffic feature. Make there be consistency to depth/shape/etc. so that they really do "define" edge

Crosswalks

Questions and answers:

Q: At crosswalks, are we adding stop signs/ signals?

No

Q: Does SHA like textured crosswalk treatments? How about brick or pressed concrete?

SHA may approve colors and some textures, but they will not approve speed bumps or other vertical impediments.

Q: Will you keep the existing crosswalks (e.g., near house of Musical Traditions)?

Yes. They will be upgraded using the same design as the proposed new crosswalks.

Comments:

- Multiple crosswalks are the best way to reduce the continuity of the straight-away between Columbia and Philadelphia.

Suggestions:

- Use pavers in crosswalk.
- Place rumble strips adjacent to crosswalks.
- Do not use rumble strips. Carroll Ave is noisy enough already.
- Add texture at bump outs
- Add lighting at crosswalks – lighted bollards or on the ground
- Use 12 foot poles lighted at all intersections to unify
- Add timers to identify crossing times
- Use a color inlay for all crosswalks because more contrast needed than just paint stripes.
- Crosswalks need some indicator for blind pedestrians - bumps or scoring

Bicycle lanes

Questions and answers:

Q: What is the trade off for bike lanes versus a better pedestrian walkway?

Bike lanes provide additional buffer space between cars and pedestrians. They also improve bike safety and encourage residents and commuters to bike through town rather than drive. The City will be making improvements to bicycle and pedestrian paths. To accommodate adequate sidewalk space, bike areas will be slightly narrower (1- 1.5 feet) than an SHA designated bike lane (which must be 5 feet wide).

Q: What materials can you use to define bike lanes?

The City is investigating new asphalt polymer surfaces that make the bike lanes a different color than the rest of the asphalt.

Q: Can you use a different symbol for bicycle? Like a Victorian velocipede?

The City must get permission from SHA to place any painted markings in the right-of-way. Because they have an official bicycle path symbol, it is unlikely they would allow an alternate.

Q: Does it make sense to have a bike area for such a limited length?

Yes. This bicycle area can set the standard for design throughout the City. It may be continued in a future project by extending along Carroll or Ethan Allen. It will also provide links to other area bike paths such as the Metropolitan Branch Trail.

Comments:

- On other areas there seem to be ideas that will cut into the bike areas, but not in the residential area, where there is the greatest need for safety improvements.
- Commit to the bike lanes: do not interrupt them with bulb outs, etc.

Suggestions:

- Install bike racks that the city already has in the commercial area.

Retaining walls

Questions and answers:

Q: How many houses will have retaining walls?

The design plans have not yet been finalized so there is no definite answer yet.

Comments:

- Like form liners with color
- If the walls are capped it can provide seating for the July 4th parade.
- Don't like form liners they are "faux."

Suggestions:

- Use walls as an opportunity for character; can use some concrete or different textures
- Use consistent type of wall with variety in pattern/color
- Share costs with individual owners for real stone or different ideas
- Use durable material
- Use interlocking cast concrete walls.
- Provide homeowners some variety in retaining wall design.

Vegetation

Questions and answers:

Q: Will you use the same street tree the whole way or vary them?

Most likely they will be varied, either randomly or using a pattern.

Q: Who will take care of the plantings? What is long-term maintenance for the trees?

The City will use various strategies depending on the site. Currently the City requires

homeowners to maintain the strip in front of their property. However, when a homeowner is unable to maintain the property, the City often maintains it for them. For this reason, the City would prefer a plant or shrub that would provide height and interest for traffic calming year round but only require minimal care. For instance, many species would only require a once a year trim and then replenishing during years of heavy snowfall. This is more efficient for maintenance crews than mowing several times during the summer. All trees in the public right-of-way will have a three-year care contract with a landscaping company. In the business district, the City will care for street trees and plantings.

Q: The plan for trees seems ambitious. Is this more like a master plan or will they all be planted for this project?

It is likely that the majority will be planted for this project.

Q: How long will it take for trees to mature enough to provide good shade?

Four to five years is typical but much depends on the species and the weather conditions.

Q: What is the growth rate of trees proposed for traffic calming?

Many trees grow 10-14 inches per year. This rate varies by species and growing conditions

Q: Are you looking at drought-resistant trees?

Yes. The City is aware that the micro-climate on Carroll Ave is harsh for trees. The species chosen will be hardy enough to remain healthy under these conditions.

Q: Who chooses tree type and planting species?

The decision will be based on community input and coordinated by the City Arborist and the Department of Economic and Community Development.

Q: You discuss the tree canopy as helping to slow traffic, but with trees in yards now 8 ft from the street will that slow traffic?

Currently Carroll Avenue has an inconsistent canopy. In addition, the road is not designed with the canopy to promote traffic calming. For instance, while there is a good canopy on the residential side of Columbia and Carroll Avenues, the wide open expanse of asphalt with little painting, curbs, or other indicators does little to warn or slow down traffic.

Q: Would it be cheaper to just move trees?

No. Many of the trees are not in good health and would not survive moving.

Comments:

- Plants will get covered in dust, garbage. Be careful what you choose. It should be "industrial strength."
- Planters, etc. will be in the heart of the historic district. It should all work together - wrought iron is good.
- Carroll Ave gets lots of sun in summer. No shade at the July 4th parade. Don't care so much what kind of tree as long as it has lots of shade.
- Trees in yards would need less water than trees in planting strips.
- Grasses can overgrow areas which ultimately impedes pedestrian.

- SHA mows grass strips before July 4th parade so people can sit on the curb. At the same time, they wind up ripping out some people's flowers.
- Shade is good. Please maximize it where you can.

Suggestions:

- Use native species wherever possible.
- Consider a program like "Adopt a Highway" or ask a gardening club for help with maintenance.
- Consider which trees make the sidewalk a mess and avoid them - ginkos, etc.
- Pick plant materials that are not poky to walk by when overgrown.
- Flowering trees would be nice - cherry blossoms.
- Create a theme with plants/ trees/flowers by using evergreens, azaleas or some other plant throughout.
- Consult with historic commission for aesthetics
- Use drought-resistant plantings only.
- For flowering trees, suggest mixing Anthrinese [sp?] resistant dogwoods and red buds. Anelanchier [sp?] is good too.

Other issues

Questions and Answers:

Q: Is there a mirror for cars to see around the corner at the Westmoreland Intersection?

Not at the moment. The City will investigate the feasibility of this idea.

Q: Where does the Gazebo fall in relation to state right-of-way, city property, or MNCPPC park property?

The Gazebo is on park property, and is owned by MNCPPC.

Q: Is there an opportunity for additional funds from MNCPPC at the park?

The City is currently negotiating for new playground equipment at the park.

Q: Can we talk to state delegates, etc to ask them to intervene with SHA? Who is talking to Peter Franchot?

Absolutely. Feel free to write your representatives and ask for their support.

Q: Can community/business owners donate plaques? Art?

The City is working with its Arts and Humanities Commission to create a plan for public art in the downtown area.

Q: Any changes to timing of lights or signalization?

These changes are not likely for this project because of its time constraints. Signal timing will be studied in more detail in the future. We will request that SHA look at the feasibility of suppressing a left turn at Philadelphia Avenue and the moderating the left free turn at the intersection of Carroll and Laurel Avenues.

Q: Do these concepts meet the construction budget?

Yes. The proposals all meet the current budget constraints, including a contingency.

Q: What about utilities/ old bell south lines?

The City is requesting information from the appropriate utility companies. Unfortunately, electric lines for lamps cannot share the same conduit with optic or cable wiring.

Q: Why is the project under such a tight time frame?

The State provided the City with a grant that must be "encumbered", or under contract by June 30 or else the grant will be revoked.

Q: Is the double stripe counted as part of the lane?

Yes. Lane width is measured from the centerline of the street.

Q: What size vehicle is determining the turn radius? Since TP streets are already narrow, can we reduce radii to keep big trucks out?

We are exploring the possibility of tightening many of the turning radiuses. We will not do so if it means compromising public safety, e.g. limiting fire trucks.

Q: Is 11 feet the minimum auto-lane width?

Eleven feet is the current minimum standard from SHA. We would like them to approve a narrower width of 10 feet.

Comments:

- Please maintain all on-street parking spaces. Residents of Westmoreland especially need it. On-street parking is also good for traffic calming, as well as supporting the businesses. It activates the street.
- Keep the area historic.
- Don't let it be like Bethesda.
- Thank you so much for doing it this way!
- Anything will be an improvement (from what I can see)... Keep it up!
- Remember that this area is the heart of a historic district. An historic character and integrity must be maintained.

Suggestions:

- Make Westmoreland one-way.
- Build a space for lighting to be installed at a later date but do not commit to installing bases for electric streetlights. Submit lighting proposal separately as community arts project or through another funding source.
- Please prioritize the individual elements for the Columbia-Philadelphia segment so that highest priority tasks are covered with existing funds.